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WAR AND THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

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I.

IN ITS ideal aspect the Christian religion maintains an unqualified opposition to war. It condemns the human impulses and motives without which war would be impossible. At the same time it is true that the teachings of Christ nowhere show a specific condemnation of war, or of participation in war. Christ's condemnation of war is not specific, but is contained in a general principle. The principle in question is plainly the one concerning Christian love. Christ enjoins peace, and peace of a particular kind, in enjoining love of God and of fellow men. He condemns war, in condemning all uncharitableness. The ideal meaning of the Christian religion, while it does not condemn war specifically, and of course not exclusively, does condemn war in principle, and along with a great many other things, without any qualification.

In its historical aspect the Christian religion shows a different attitude to war. The Christian ideal became a matter of fact and of history in the Christian Church. The Church has never condemned war in its doctrine. In the first three centuries certain Christian writers maintained, for various reasons, a more or less consistent opposition to war: but the most that can be said is that opinion among the early Christians was divided on the subject; and in practice the early Churches, perhaps from the very first, permitted Christians to serve in the armies of the Empire. After the association of the Church and the Roman State at the time of Constantine, there was no thought of maintaining the inconsistency of war in general and the Christian religion. The Church often exerted its influence in favor of peaceful rather than warlike methods; but it did not condemn war without qualification. Saint Ambrose and Saint Augustine distinguished between just

and unjust war, that is, they taught that war might be just and lawful in certain circumstances. Saint Thomas Aquinas, and later Suarez, developed this doctrine—a doctrine which was put in lay form by Grotius and which has been held by Christian communities generally.

The attitude of the Church refers directly to the question of participation in war rather than to the question of war as a whole, and its place in the universe. But an attitude to the second question is implied in it; and it is the second question of the phenomenon of war as a whole, and its relation to Christianity, that we here wish to consider. And we wish to go beyond the explicit attitude of the Church and to consider fundamental reasons and connections. War and the Christian religion of history are connected in fundamental ways by the action of common enemies: they are connected, not indeed by virtue of the Christian ideal taken by itself and in isolation, but by virtue of the world-conditions in which this ideal was under the necessity of being realized.

II.

War and the Christian religion of history have a point of contact in the fact that both of them, to make any headway at all, must disrupt and break through a level of human life which is sometimes described as materialism, sometimes as sensualism. I shall call this level of life sensualism; and it will be necessary to give a few words to an account of the meaning of sensualism or absorption in the life of the senses.

The sensual, or the sensuous, level of life can be called “life” only in the broad and animal meaning of the word. If by “life” one understands right and true life, the proper life of man, then sensualism is not a kind of life at all. It is not life, but the vice which kills all life. The most general idea of sensualism is the idea of idleness or sloth. We need not suppose that slothfulness is confined to those who are outwardly or even inwardly motionless. The slothful and the sensuous may move, and in the pursuit of their goal they often do move with great rapidity. But

though the slothful may move, they are not moved by any ideal or spiritual considerations. Their motion does not constitute activity; for all activity lies in spirit and its free and self-directing operation. And all real and true life consists in such activity. To this real life, sensualism stands opposed as dead indifference and inertia.

If we wish to define sensualism further we can do so by saying that it is a form of life in which a wrong place is held by the body and its satisfactions. It moves among the desires and wants which begin in the body and terminate there, without the admixture of any element of soul or spirit. The abstract end of these wants is pleasure, comfort, sense-satisfaction. It could not be supposed that all who follow in the sensualist way of life find actual satisfaction or comfort; it is certain that many do not. But the principle is the same, whether men find this sense-comfort or merely believe in it as the proper end of human existence.

The sensuous way of life is again characterized by the place which it assigns to physical things. The things which are not seen are to it unreal and unmeaning. Its thought moves among things visible and tangible. It may indeed be admitted that visible and tangible things, and the perception of them, are innocent enough: they do not of themselves constitute sensualism. The sensualist vice is more radical. It lies in the blank awareness of things seen without the awareness of unseen and eternal meanings and principles present in them.

Sensualism, in so far as it gets embodied in individual men, entails the destruction of social life and organization. By confining men's interest to pleasure and comfort it in principle confines them to themselves. In those among whom the sensualist scheme of life finds its appropriate satisfaction the social consequence is indifference and "pot-bellied equanimity." Or where, for whatever reasons, conceptions in their essence sensualistic are made to move in altruistic and socializing directions, there is this to be observed: the sensualist creed never supplies an adequate conception of men, of their nature, destiny and needs, and

never produces a real principle of social organization. The net result of satisfied sensualism is in any case more apt to be stolid equanimity. In those among whom sensualism is unsatisfied, among whom it operates as an outlook on life rather than as a present fulfillment, we cannot speak of equanimity. The result here is unrest and discontent with existence. But such discontent is in itself essentially impotent and can produce no real principle of social unity and action; nor can it be appealed to by such a principle from without. Sensualism is the eternal death of individuals, and a chief factor in the earthly death and dissolution of societies.

The Christian religion—not unlike certain other religions—has worked against sensualism. “While we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.” Over against the life which is at home in the body, the life which centers round interest in sense-satisfaction, the Christian religion has set the conception of life in the spirit. The meaning of Christ’s saying: “I came not to send peace, but a sword,” is found doubtless in this connection: the sword is the sword of spiritual warfare against natural sensuous sloth and inertia. In its action in history the Christian religion has been a spur to the sensuous and indolent; it has quickened the will and lifted up the mind of the slothful. It has imprinted on men’s belief the conception of things which, though not bodily, are real and potent and universal. To sensuous perception it has opposed the idea of faith; to things seen, the idea of things unseen and eternal; to pleasure, the paradox of duty and sacrifice; to finite satisfaction, the idea of endless endeavor with its hope of heaven and its fear of hell; to sensuous separation, the idea of a spiritual community, in which men are members one of another. It has effected, in some measure at least, a destruction of the power of sensualism.

The war spirit too has effected, among other things less creditable to it, a partial liberation of men from the sensualism all too natural to them. It has done this in various ways. War fills men with a new conception of the world.

It forces upon the minds of common men an unusual amount of interest in supersensible things, such as right, justice, duty, truth, and principle. In war time the intensified awareness of unseen and untouched things finds its center—how rightly or wrongly I do not inquire—in the consciousness of country, the nation, and the national cause. The nation and the national cause themselves transcend the immediate and the present and are in large part—like the objects of religious faith—supersensible. War also fills men with a new conception of life and its purpose. With the grasp of the cause or principle goes love and devotion to it; and this implies that men are led to concede an uncommon place in life to unselfish purposes and values. The socializing effect which war has within a nation, the levelling of all (partially at least) in work for a common cause and before a common danger, needs no special emphasis: it is plainly akin to the effect contemplated by religion. But not only is the purpose of life changed from its ordinary egoistic and individual shape into something superindividual; it is also changed into something super-sensuous. This is perhaps of all the spiritual effects of war the most fundamental. It is shown in the soldier's attitude toward life and death. The soldier must love life, and yet scorn it. He must feel that life is valuable; for unless life is in some sense great and valuable the national cause itself is without point or meaning. Yet he risks his own life with utter detachment. He must love life in a certain form and under certain conditions, and at the same time scorn the mere sensuous and bodily continuance of life without duty performed, without the supreme exertion, without honor, without principle. The teaching of war here touches closely that of religion. War makes men comprehend that life too tenaciously clung to and too much cherished in its bodily and sensuous form may be lost in a higher form. In doing this the war spirit effects a fundamental liberation of men from the bondage of sensuous life.

A certain unity of action is thus discoverable in war and

the Christian religion. The war spirit is indeed not identical with the spirit of God; it is not entirely spiritual. Only because of the intimate connection of man's body with his soul and spirit is war possible at all. But war represents the world much more obviously than it does the body or the flesh; it represents a movement away from the flesh and its particular sins. On the level of "grace" this movement may be effected by other means and in other ways, but on the level of "nature" it has been the warfare of nation with nation more than any other thing which has operated as a check to sensuality, to the flesh and its corruptions. The spirited is the natural foundation of man's grasp of the spiritual. The soldier may seem to have little in common with the "low in spirit," the "meek," and the "humble"; but he has much more in common with them than he has with the sensuous, who are neither high in spirit nor low in spirit, but impervious to all forms of spirit whatever. War has nurtured in man's nature, by violent means indeed, the spirit which religion strives to turn into an apprehension of the Spirit of God and finally of the universal spiritual community of men.

III.

It may be doubted whether ordinary men think much about war in the abstract. They may have in them a latent attitude to war in general, but what explicit thinking they do is mostly concerning this or that particular war and the advisability of their country entering upon it. They do not formulate opinions about the advisability of war in general. On the other hand writers of a philosophic tendency do often formulate opinions about war in the abstract, and its function in the universe. I should like now to notice briefly the way in which in the history of thought opinions on the subject of war are connected in the minds of the people who hold them with opinions on the subject of religion.

Views on the subject of war may be divided into those held by pacifists and those held by non-pacifists. With

regard to the value of war, pacifists hold that war is entirely evil, or that whatever good may pertain to it is inconsiderable. Writers who are not pacifists hold that war is in part evil and in part good, and that the good pertaining to it may be considerable. No one, so far as I know, holds that war is entirely good. But the question of the good and evil of war, while it may be the more obvious issue, is really not the fundamental issue between pacifists and non-pacifists. The pacifist thinker always holds, not only that war is the greatest of evils, but also that it is something whose eradication from human affairs is approaching or easily possible. The non-pacifist holds that as a matter of fact war is not a thing whose disappearance from human affairs is approaching; and his practical attitude with regard to the policy of his own country is based on this consideration. Non-pacifist writers do not first hold that war is a good thing, and then add the precept that nations ought to see to it that wars occur from time to time; they first hold that wars between nations will occur for some time to come whatever pacifists may think about the matter, and they add the consideration that war is not so entirely evil as pacifists think. The pacifist and non-pacifist groups in the history of thought are divided with regard to both the value and the reality of war—and what I wish to point out is that pretty much the same groups are divided in the same sense with regard to religion.

The pacifist view of war has usually been associated with a rationalist or free-thinking view of whatever is characteristic in Christianity: this can be verified in the opinion current at the present time as well as in the broad movements of human opinion in the past. The pacifist view of war was firmly held by Herbert Spencer and Buckle; it was held perhaps even more firmly by Jeremy Bentham and his immediate school of Utilitarians; it was held by David Hume and Thomas Hobbes; it was held by Comte and the Positivists generally; it was held by St. Simon and Fourier; it was held never more firmly than by the *philosophes* and Encyclopædists of the eighteenth century—

by Voltaire, Holbach, Diderot, Helvetius and Condorcet; and altogether one is justified in the conclusion that a very large proportion of its most distinguished adherents have been equally zealous against war and against the Christian religion. It is also true that if we consider a list of rationalist thinkers we find that a still larger proportion of them—indeed nearly all of them—have been partisans of radical pacifism.

And non-pacifist opinion has usually been associated with essentially Christian opinion. Hegel and Cousin are perhaps the philosophic writers who are best known for the theory that war has a positive value in world-history. Kant, while difficult to classify in this matter, expresses in many places a sense of the positive value of war never found among radical pacifists. Joseph de Maistre in his *Soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* undertakes a thorough-going *apologia* of war. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Carlyle, and Ruskin—not to mention many English ecclesiastic writers of the last century—show themselves sensible of the virtues of war and of warrior nations generally. Milton speaks in a decidedly martial strain in his *Defence of the English People* and *Ikonoklastes*. Luther justifies war under certain conditions in his essay, *Ob Kriegsleute auch in seligem Stande sein koennen*. It is indeed true that many writers who may be cited as non-pacifist may also be cited as pacifist—that many of them exemplify what Ruskin said of himself: “It is impossible for me to write consistently about war, for the groups of facts I have gathered lead me to two precisely opposite conclusions.” The subject of war is complex—except indeed to pacifists—and opinion about it may easily be inconsistent. All I wish to say is that in general where we find opinion which acknowledges in war any considerable element of worth we also find, not a materialist or rationalist philosophy, but a religious and essentially Christian philosophy. And in proof of the fact that where a Christian philosophy is held there is generally an inclination to grant some justification to war in the abstract, we have only to recall that the doctrine of the

Christian Church is that summed up by Suarez: "*bellum simpliciter nec est malum, nec Christianis prohibitum.*"

We have said that the pacifist view of war is usually associated with a rationalistic view of Christianity. It may seem that in sects such as the Anabaptists, Quakers, etc., a pacifist view of war is combined with a view of Christianity which is essentially Christian. Granted that Quakerism is essentially Christian, it is not as a matter of history of sufficient moment to cause us to change our generalization. But it may be questioned to what extent Quakerism is essentially Christian. Quakerism (like the doctrine of most religious sects which have made war a special object of denunciation) rests more or less squarely on what in the philosophy of religion is known as mysticism. In its general form mysticism is a doctrine and way of life which turns the mind inward towards itself and ends in the denial of all separation and distinction in physical or mental existence. It is in its essence inimical to war; this is perhaps most clearly shown in both the theory and practice of the thoroughly mystic system of Hindu Buddhism. And mysticism in its purity is also inimical to the Christian religion: it is just as certainly inimical to the Christian religion as is rationalism—though in the Western world it is of much less frequent occurrence and of much less significance.

We said too that non-pacifist opinion was usually associated with essentially Christian opinion. It might seem that modern thought presents a significant exception in the case of Nietzsche. Nietzsche has a sense—and of course an exaggerated sense—of the value of war and conflict, and it would at the same time seem strange to say that he was essentially Christian. But it should be observed that his attitude to Christianity is far from being that of ordinary rationalism; and of course far from being that of mysticism. To the Christian religion Nietzsche opposes another religion, that of pagan Dionyseanism. He leaves standing at least the Christian idea of spirit, and the Christian idea of individuality—just those parts of the essentially Christian

temper which make it non-pacifistic. And a similar consideration would be found to apply to Ernest Renan, who expresses an appreciation of war in *La Réforme Intellectuelle et Morale*.

IV.

The mode of thought known as rationalism, that described in Lecky's *Rationalism in Europe*, has been the basis of significant opposition to war in the abstract. So much may be gathered from the history of thought: we have now to examine somewhat more closely the inner essence of this opposition. Rationalism is a philosophic continuation of sensualism. Spirit in all its manifestations may be opposed by sense: but it may also be opposed by common sense reason or rationalism; and in this fact lies a principal point of contact between war and the Christian religion, and indeed between war and religion generally.

As sensualism is a mode or condition of life, rationalism is primarily a mode of thought. It is of course hostile to religion. We need not dwell on that point: we need only examine the sense in which it is hostile to war. It is hostile to war in two ways. In the first place, it fabricates a certain conception of war—a very derogatory conception—and in the second place, largely on the basis of this, it acts as a force in society tending to make war impossible. It does these things in accordance with its general characteristics and principles, that is, in accordance with the same principles by virtue of which it opposes religion.

One of the general characteristics of the rationalist creed—one which determines to a considerable extent its view of war—is the rationalist and generally radical idea of “progress.” The rationalist believes firmly in a kind of progress which lies along straight lines and leads steadily to goals which are obvious and well defined. The world of rationalist thought is always plain, simple, direct and well defined, a world in which things lie flat, in which there is no mystery and no indirection. The rationalist believes in progress in straight lines, progress by addition. He misses the real and much more complex logic of living and organic

things, and the real logic of progress. He fails to apprehend the progress which lies through deep valleys, the life which arises from death and sacrifice, the gain in the whole which comes of loss in the part, and comes in a greater than common sense degree, the reality which requires negation for its very reality. He has no conception of the world as being, what it largely is, in *his* sense of the word an irrational knot—a knot in which the threads run in irrational and unexpected directions. The rationalistic thinker, to put it shortly, has no sense of paradox in human affairs, and war, as well as religion, abounds in paradox.

Another characteristic of the rationalist creed is its idea of what may be called human nature. This is of course fundamental in rationalism, and affects greatly its conception of war. The rationalist sets out to interpret things in terms of common sense reason, and easily neglects the more mysterious and wayward forces of human nature, such as instinct, will, passion, sentiment, and intuition. It is in these forces that war is ultimately rooted; but of these forces the rationalist is only imperfectly conscious. In line with this is the rationalistic predilection for the economic interpretation of man. The form of rationalistic doctrine known as Utilitarianism has done much to spread the conception of human life as a matter of hedonistic and particularly economic calculation. In accordance with this idea, rationalists often hold that alleged reasons of economic advantage—which in fact may or may not be real reasons—are rapidly making war impossible, or have already made it impossible. They look on the world “with the vision of the bucket-shop”; they see “money, interest, materialism, credit”—everything but “the will of man.” They fail to grasp in its true import the fact that neither individual men nor nations can be counted on to follow economic advantage solely. A further part of the rationalist view of human nature is an extreme confidence in man’s fundamental innocence. The rationalist passes very lightly over the aspect of human nature which in Christian theology is known as original sin. As he has

little conception of the will of man, he has little conception of the extent and meaning of human willfulness. He may picture man as intent on economic self-interest, but he has little notion of other and intenser kinds of selfishness. The rationalist underestimates the intensity of the forces which divide men and nations: he furthermore underestimates the intensity of the forces which actually bind men together, particularly within nations. This final part of rationalist thought may be called a belief in the *atomistic* composition of human nature. As in natural science things are dissolved into separate atoms, so in the rationalist account of man. The soul is dissolved into separate mental atoms or states; moral life, otherwise connected with some idea of law or duty, is broken up into separate feelings and interests; society is dissolved into separate and more or less disconnected entities called "individuals." It is the last of these forms of dissolution which specially concerns us. The rationalist mode of thought, viewing human nature from a generally atomistic standpoint, sees in society what it considers individual men, but only vaguely the forces which bind men together into organic wholes and unities. It sees individual men, but it has a defective sense of the underlying reality of states and nations, and consequently of the feelings and actions of which men, when they feel and act as states and nations, are really capable.

In accordance with these general principles, rationalistic thought fabricates its conception of war. Just as rationalism underrates the value and reality of religion, it underates the value and meaning of war in human affairs on the one hand and on the other hand war's reality and permanence. The evil pertaining to war is doubtless great; but rationalism exaggerates it. It ignores or underestimates the positive value of war in human affairs; and it does this chiefly in connection with its idea of progress. In accordance with its idea of man as essentially a hedonistic and economic calculating machine, and as essentially innocent and mildly private and individualistic, it greatly underestimates too the reality and permanence of war.

But rationalism does something beyond fabricating this conception of war. Partly by virtue of this conception, partly by virtue of other aspects of its nature and tendency, it acts as an effective force opposing the occurrence of war. In so far as it is embodied in the thought and belief of people composing states it reduces the chance of states manifesting themselves in warlike activity. In so far as rationalistic ideas and beliefs are current in the world the phenomenon of war between states is made to just that extent impossible.

It might appear that in that case the best thing the world could do would be to become rationalistic. The gain would, however, not be clear or unmixed. Rationalism makes war impossible by displacing the ideas without which *all* social life would be impossible. It strikes at war by striking at the conceptions of faith, duty, and loyalty to larger social wholes—conceptions on which all life in society, all social aggregation and unity, must ultimately be founded. The pursuit of wealth and material happiness never has been and never will be a bond sufficient to hold together a human society. The sensualistic ideal of rationalism, in so far as it succeeds in realizing itself, may cast out war between states; but it puts in place of it social death and dissolution, perhaps civil strife within states. It may destroy war between states, and a great deal more besides; but it can construct no vital unity of mankind: it can generate no real principle of social life and organization. The words of Mazzini are worth recalling: "Without the religion of duty any great social transformation is impossible."

The antagonism of the forces we have been tracing is of course mutual. War and religion offer to rationalism, just as they do to sensualism, a certain opposition. Religion does this directly; war rather more indirectly: as a fact or condition war opposes in rationalism something which is essentially a theoretical conception. The rationalistic theory makes the fact of war appear meaningless and impossible. The fact, in so far as it occurs, makes the theory untenable—untenable as a theory of human nature and of the world in general.

V.

Whatever connection may exist between war and the Christian religion holds only with regard to the Christian religion of history. No connection is discoverable between the concrete phenomena of war and the ideal and absolute essence of the Christian religion.

In an imperfect world war has a function which it would not have in a perfect world. War is connected with the Christian religion of history through the imperfection of the world, and in particular through the imperfection of certain kinds of peace. War in itself has never been regarded by historical Christianity with unqualified hostility; and there are very fundamental reasons which make such hostility impossible. In an imperfect world war and the Christian religion have many common enemies. The Christian Church could never agree with radical pacifists in thinking that war in itself is the "foulest blot" on human existence, the greatest evil which besets mankind. To Christian minds it cannot but be plain that other things may be even more displeasing than warfare in the sight of God—things which tend to produce the state of peace in society and thrive in the midst of peace, things which both war and the Christian religion have the effect of overcoming. Peace founded on mysticism, on spiritual nihilism, the peace which has settled over Buddhist India, is not a Christian kind of peace; but in any case the forces producing it are not active among western peoples. Peace founded on sloth, the peace which has often come to decadent societies, is also not a Christian peace. Peace founded on the forces of sensualism and rationalism—forces represented by a large part of the pacifist feeling in the world to-day—would be equally destructive of war and of the Christian religion. In the imperfect world which actually exists, peace may be attained in human society which is in its essence anti-Christian. Through this fact war acquires the connection we have seen it to have with the Christian religion of history.

But peace, not war, would characterize the world pro-

jected in the Christian ideal. This peace would be of a particular kind. It would differ greatly from the usual dream of rationalist pacifism. It would be reached, not by suppressing spirit, but by making it more spiritual; not by rooting up will, but by converting it into good will; not by eliminating national loyalty, but by placing beside it a wider and perhaps somewhat different loyalty. It would be reached, not by turning spirit into sense or common sense reason, but by establishing in spirit a greater degree of universality and unity. A Christian kind of peace would be the peace of men who love God, and love their neighbors as themselves. It would obtain in international relations; but that would be perhaps the least of what it would do. It would obtain also within nations and in individual men. The principle of such peace would be spiritual rather than material or political; it would be a world church rather than a world state. In the world marked out by the ideal meaning of Christianity peace would be founded on the union (though not the identity) of all men in a spiritual and divine community, a community which, just because divine and above nature, might be above nations without being subversive of the real values of nationality.

Peace of this kind, peace of the kind defined by the ideal essence of the Christian religion, has never been completely realized. It may be doubted if there exists in the world any very sincere or single-minded desire to see it realized. Yet peace of this kind is the only peace which the world would find sufferable, the only peace in which the human spirit could escape extinction; and it is the only peace which the world would find lastingly possible.

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